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DIFFERENT TYPES OF COFFEE: DETAILED EXPLANATION

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This guide dives into the full technical spectrum of coffee, from plant genetics and processing to roast profiles, grind science, extraction methods, water chemistry, equipment calibration, and emerging trends. Each section unpacks critical parameters that shape flavor, aroma, body, and balance. Whether you're a barista seeking precision or an enthusiast chasing consistency, this resource lays out every variable to master your brew.

1. Coffee Species and Cultivar Genetics

Coffee begins with three primary species and dozens of cultivars, each with unique agronomic and sensory traits.

- Coffea arabica Grown at 1,000–2,200 m, arabica thrives in cooler temperatures (15–24 °C). It contains complex volatile compounds (e.g., aldehydes, esters) and lower caffeine (0.8–1.4 %) for bright acidity and floral notes.
- Coffea robusta (C. canephora) Prefers 200–800 m altitudes and warmer climates (24–30 °C). Higher caffeine (1.7–4 %) confers pest resistance and delivers a heavier body with earthy, bitter flavors.
- Coffea liberica & Excelsa Accounting for <2 % global output, these species exhibit larger beans, fruity–woody aromatics, and are often blended to add complexity.

Cultivar selection (for example, Bourbon, Typica, SL28, Geisha) further refines cup characteristics based on yield, disease resistance, and genetic lineage.

2. Post-Harvest Processing Methods

Processing transforms cherry into green bean, profoundly affecting flavor development and defect rates.

- Washed (Wet) Process Fruit pulp removed within hours; beans fermented 12–48 h to strip mucilage. Yields clean acidity and pronounced varietal notes.
- Natural (Dry) Process Whole cherries sun-dried on raised beds for 10–30 days. Favors heavier body, fruity-winey aromatics, and low acidity but risks overfermentation.
- Honey (Pulped Natural) Partial mucilage retention (white, yellow, red, black honey levels) creates a balance of washed clarity and natural sweetness.
- Advanced Fermentations Anaerobic, carbonic maceration, and co-fermentation with yeasts or bacteria amplify tropical fruit esters and introduce novel flavor layers.

3. Roast Profiles and Chemical Reactions

Roasting converts green bean chemistry into drinkable coffee through controlled heat application.

Roast Level	Bean Color	First Crack (°C)	Flavor Notes	Body	Acidity
Light	Light brown	196–201	Floral, citrus, bright acidity	Light	High
Medium	Medium brown	201–205	Caramel, nutty, balanced acidity	Medium	Medium
Dark	Chocolate to black	Beyond 205	Smoky, bittersweet, low acidity	Full	Low

Key chemical transformations:

1. Endothermic stage (up to 160 °C): moisture loss, Maillard precursors form.
2. First crack (196–201 °C): bean expansion, volatile organic compounds released.
3. Second crack (224–230 °C): pyrolysis intensifies, sugar caramelization, phenolic degradation.

Precise drum speed, airflow, and roast time (8–16 min) allow roasters to target specific flavor profiles.

4. Grind Size and Particle Distribution

Grind uniformity controls extraction rate and cup clarity. Burr grinders are preferred for consistent particle size distribution (PSD).

- Fine (Espresso, Turkish): D50 ~200 µm, D90 <350 µm. Extraction in 25–30 s.
- Medium (Pour-Over, AeroPress): D50 ~600 µm, D90 ~850 µm. Brew time 2–4 min.
- Coarse (French Press, Cold Brew): D50 ~1,200 µm, D90 ~1,800 µm. Steep time 4 min to 24 h.

Particle size metrics (D10, D50, D90) guide adjustments: a finer grind increases total dissolved solids (TDS) and extraction yield, while coarser reduces bitterness.

5. Extraction Methods and Parameters

Each brewing technique is defined by precise variables: water temperature, pressure, coffee-to-water ratio, and time.

Method	Temp (°C)	Pressure (bar)	Ratio (g coffee : ml water)	Time	Grind
Espresso	90–96	9–11	1 : 2	25–30 s	Fine
Pour-Over	92–96	0	1 : 15	2.5–4 min	Medium
French Press	90–95	0	1 : 12	4–5 min	Coarse
AeroPress	80–92	0–0.5	1 : 12–1 : 17	1–2 min	Medium-Fine
Siphon	92–96	Vacuum	1 : 15	2–3 min	Medium
Cold Brew	20–25	0	1 : 15–1 : 18	12–24 h	Coarse

Manipulating these parameters allows baristas to dial in target extraction yields (18–22 %) and TDS (1.25–1.45 %).

6. Water Chemistry and Quality Control

Water composition often accounts for 98 % of your cup. Ideal extraction water balances mineral content and pH.

- Total Dissolved Solids (TDS): 75–150 ppm
- Calcium hardness ($CaCO_3$): 50–150 ppm for mouthfeel and clarity
- Magnesium hardness: 10–30 ppm enhances extraction of organic acids
- pH range: 6.5–7.5 to avoid flat or sour notes

Baristas adjust with brewing-specific mineral packets or reverse-osmosis systems to achieve consistency.

7. Equipment Calibration and Monitoring

Precision tools ensure repeatability across shots and brews.

- Scale accuracy: ±0.1 g
- Water temperature: ±1 °C using a calibrated thermocouple
- Refractometer: measures TDS to calculate extraction yield
- Grinder adjustments: track settings vs PSD using sieving or laser diffraction

Logging each variable in a brew journal or digital app helps identify correlations between parameters and cup quality.

8. Emerging Trends in Specialty Coffee

The industry continually innovates to elevate complexity and sustainability.

- Nitro Cold Brew: infuses nitrogen for creamy texture without dairy
- Cascara Infusions: tea-style brews from dried coffee cherry husks
- Blockchain Traceability: end-to-end trace records from farm to cup
- Fermentation Science: controlled microbial consortia for unique ester profiles
- Carbon-Neutral Roasting: biofuel-powered roasters and CO_2 offsets

These developments cater to consumer curiosity and ethical sourcing demands.

9. Sensory Evaluation and Pairing

Mastering flavor profiling turns each cup into a multi-dimensional experience.

- Cupping Protocol: standardize grind, water, and tasting methodology
- Flavor Wheel: articulate notes of fruit, floral, nut, spice, and environmental terroir
- Aroma vs. Taste: distinguish retronasal (aftertaste) from orthonasal (initial sniff) perception
- Food Pairing: match acidity with cheese, body with chocolate, and aromatic oils with pastries

Structured sensory training refines your palate and aids in quality control.

Further Exploration

Consider delving into barista championship techniques, agroforestry’s impact on coffee biodiversity, or AI-driven roast profiling. Understanding the microbiome of coffee fermentation and the role of terroir in cup differentiation can deepen both scientific knowledge and sensory appreciation.

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QTE TECHNOLOGIES CO.,LTD

Head Office

Address: 11th Floor, Zen Tower, No.12 Khuat Duy Tien St, Thanh Xuan Ward, Hanoi, Vietnam

Phone: +84 935 486 698

Hotline: +84 935 486 698

Email: info@qtetech.com.vn

Website: https://qtetech.com/

Transaction office in Ho Chi Minh City

Address: 18th Floor - Indochina Park Tower - 04 Nguyen Dinh Chieu St, Tan Dinh Ward, Ho Chi Minh City, VietNam

Phone: +84 935 486 698

Hotline: +84 935 486 698

Email: info@qtetech.com.vn

Website: https://qtetech.com/

Transaction office in Da Nang

Address: 9th Floor - Lighthouse Building - No.1254 Xo Viet Nghe Tinh - Hoa Cuong Ward - Da Nang City - Vietnam

Phone: +84 935 486 698

Hotline: +84 935 486 698

Email: info@qtetech.com.vn

Website: https://qtetech.com/

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